



CONTRIBUTION OF DARA SHIKOH TO PERSIAN LITERATURE (1615-1659)

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ABOUT

Dara shikoh also known as Dara shukuh. Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh was the eldest son of emperor Shahjahan. Dara as is generally known was the most loved child of Shahjahan and as such the emperor did not like to lose his company by sending him to distant provinces, the other princes Shuja Murad and Aurangzeb were sent out as Provincial governors but Dara "the eldest child of the Khilafat" was kept at the imperial court, under the very eyes of his fond father who was unwilling to part company with him. This excess of love was unfortunate in two ways it aroused the Jealousy of the other princes and shut out Dara from gaining first hand experience as a soldier and an administration. Undoubtedly he was appointed governor of the provinces of Allahabad and the Punjab but he was allowed to live at the capital and rule through his agents. This rule by proxy could hardly make him experienced. He also led the Kandhar Campaign in 1053. A.H.

The expedition was unsuccessful, so was the previous one led by Aurangzeb. But it cannot be denied that Dara made certain tactical blunders and the over-concern of his father for him hastened his recall, The task being thus left unaccomplished.

A Prince who has passed his days in the luxuries of a most magnificent Mughal court, would have been expected to be utterly hopeless in the field of action. In the struggle for succession which followed the illness of Shahjahan in 1067 A.H.

The three brothers Shuja, Murad and Aurangzeb were marching on agree with a well equipped and trained army and Dara had to face them with all the resources at his disposal. He sent his son Sulaiman Shikoh against Shuja. Who was routed and turned back. But before Sulaiman could come to the rescue of his father. The latter had been defeated by the combined forces of Aurangzeb and Murad at Samugarh (7th Ramadan 1068 A.H). The battle of Samugarh sealed the fate of Dara. The Flight of Dara in a very painful episode of suffering, privation and misery.

Dara was defeated by his younger brother Aurangzeb. He was executed in 1659 on Aurangzeb's order in a bitter struggle for the imperial throne.

Dara Shikoh turned out to be a great scholar and mystic with an insatiable thirst for knowledge and deep rooted Sufistic leanings. He read extensively not only from the Holy Quran and traditions of the Prophet (Hadith) and other works on orthodox Islam but also from numerous works on Sufism.

His thirst for knowledge and hankering after truth led him to read the holy books of other religious systems no less, such as Christianity and Hinduism. He was a deeply thoughtful man and liked to arrive at his own, independent conclusions after due understanding and deliberations. That is why, we find him engaged in religious discourses with a large number of saints and sages of both sects, Islam and Hinduism.

He was initiated into the Qadiri order by his spiritual preceptor Mullah Sah in 1049 A.H. Dara also held in high esteem the Hindu Saint Baba Lal Bairagi. Whom he mentions in the "Samudra-Sangam". He invited Babalal to his Palace and had a long conversation with him on religious topics which was recorded by his secretary Chandra Bhan.

Mulla Shah was the spiritual mentor of Dara Shikoh. He belonged to the Qadiri order of Sufism. He also nurtured a friendship with seventh Sikh Guru "Guru Har Rai" all this made him popular with the people. Guru Har Rai gave shelter and provided medical care to Dara possibly when he had been poisoned by Mughal operatives. Guru Har Rai provided other forms of support to Dara as he and his brother Aurangzeb battled for rights to succession. A place Shikohabad is named after Dara Shikho.

Essence

Prince Mohammad Dara Shikoh held two-sided position in Indian history as a political figure and as an intellectual personality. However his political career was short and shadowed with failures, but his contribution toward cultural legacy of Indian history is profound and amazing especially in the field of inter-religious dialogue. He was a great patron of the art and is widely considered to represent the pinnacle of Indo-Islamic cultural assimilation.

He was the icon of cultural pluralism. Religious exclusion, radical ideology, religious fundamentalism and communal forces have shadowed the ethos of cultural pluralism and secular tendencies of contemporary world. Before Dara Shikoh many saints, reformers and liberal ideologists tried to promote mutual cooperation and peaceful coexistence between adherents of various religions, cultures and ethnicities but Dara's effort were unique in various manners in the regard. He has given a model of religious toleration, which was short-lived but still has relevance and can be helpful in many ways in the present times for the promotion of socio-religious harmony between Muslims and Hindus.

He occupied a unique position among all Mughal princess because of his comparative study of Islamic mysticism and classical Hindu Philosophy. He not only followed to liberal religious attitude of his grandfather Akbar but gave a new dimension to Indo-Islamic mysticism in India and it spread all over the world through his mystical work.

Works

Dara shikohs was the author of quite a large numbers of works, and he started quite young. In his twenty fifth year (1049 A.H) he wrote "SAFINAT-UL-AWLIYA" and his twenty- eighth year (1052 A.H) Dara Composed his second work. Also biographical in nature called " SAKINAT-UL- AWLIYA" Dara's Third work was one on Sufism- entitled" RISALA-I HAQNUMA" Compass of the Truth".

At stated by Dara himself, This work is a compendium of some famous works on Sufism and discusses the various stage in the path as well as the means to highest spiritual perfections.

The fourthwork of Dara " HASANAT-UL-ARIFIN" Completed in 1064 A.H is also on Sufism being a collection of Sufisti maxims including ecstatic utterances of great mystics like Bayazid, Dhun- Nun- al- Mistri, Junaid, Ghazali, Jilani, Ibn Arabic etc. As well as the sayings of the prophet and the Caliphs and the great Hindu Saints Baba Lal.

The fifth and sixth works by Dara Shikuh " Majma-ul-Bahrain" and "Samudra sangma" in Sanskrit or The Mingling of two oceans" were completed in his fourty second year in 1065 A.H or 1657 A.D. The Majme-ul-Bahraw is full of Cosmological and Psychological subtleties, conferencing in the most candid manner the macrocosmic gnosis (ma'rifah) of Hindu and Muslim saints The editor Presented here includes the original Arabic text and detailed indices.

His most famous work " Majma-ul-Bahrain" is a sufi text on comparative religion. Name of those book in english is "the confluence of two seas or the mingling of the two oceans". Its Hindi version is called "Samudra Sangam granthe" and an urdu translation tittled " Nur-e-Ain" was lithographed in 1872. The book Majma-ul-Bahrain was also devoted to a revelation of the mystical and Pluralistic affinities between sufi and Vedantic speculation. The book was authored as a short treatise in Persian in 1654-55.

Dara was especially attracted by the Upanishads and collection of poetry, Ghazal, Najm in urdu, hindi and English. Upanishad were translated into Persian by Dara Shikoh under the title "Sirr-e- Akbar" (The great Secret). He completed the translation of fifty Upanishads from their original Sanskrit into Persian in 1657, So that they could be studied by Muslim Scholars. Further he is credited for translation of many Hindus religious texts like " Bhagwad Geeta" and Sixty Upanishads into Persian. He also translated Atharva Veda into Persian. His best known work was a study of sufi and vedantic philosophy. Dara shikoh greatly worked for Indo Islamic mysticism by highlighting the semilarities between ancient Hindu and Islamic Sufi teachings. His model of inter religious understanding is widely popular. He is an important part of Indian medieval history.

The monument "PARI MAHAL (Peer Mahal)" was built by Dara shikoh for residence for Heano's Prince Manno. It was also used as an observatory and for teaching astrology and astronomy.

CONCLUSION

Mughal Prince Dara shikoh was a renowned Sufi, poet, author and translator of Hindu religious testimonies. His Contribution can't be forgotten in literary world.

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